



WEEKLY COLUMN FOR THE WEEK OF JUNE 16, 2003

## **100 Years of Flight**

December 17 1903, in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, Orville and Wilbur Wright made the world's first successful sustained and controlled flight of a man-operated, motor-driven aircraft. Orville successfully piloted the first flight, which lasted all of 12 seconds before it touched the ground. Out of the numerous attempts that day, Wilbur piloted the longest flight, clocking in at just under one minute.

We've come quite a long way since that winter day in 1903. Today, we can fly coast-to-coast in a matter of hours and to international destinations in less than a day. In this period of time, the United States has become and remains the leader in aviation. Almost 2/3 of the world's passengers rely on the United States for travel. In honor of a century of aviation, the House of Representatives last week passed "FLIGHT-100," a bill to reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and strengthen the role of the U.S. as the world's aviation leader.

"FLIGHT-100" is a major investment in our aviation system. It increases funding for airport construction and expansion, includes money for the FAA to operate at the highest standards of safety and compensates general aviation entities for losses resulting from security mandates. The bill also protects and enhances programs crucial to Third District airports by fully-funding the FAA's Essential Air Service (EAS) and increasing funds for the Small Community Air Service Development Pilot Program.

Boone County Airport in rural Harrison depends on EAS as the program subsidizes their commercial air service since Boone and its surrounding counties are isolated a major airport. Initially, there was talk of cutting funding to this program or making the communities take on a larger share of the financial commitment, but the House Transportation Committee ensured that the program would receive full funding and support in "FLIGHT-100." We understand that the continuation and full funding of EAS is necessary for these rural communities as they simply cannot afford to pay a high cost share to sustain service and above all, they cannot afford to lose service.

The increase in funding to the Small Community Air Service Development Pilot Program will result in more marketing and development funds for Fort Smith Regional Airport. As one of the forty airports that has been selected to participate in the pilot program, Fort Smith Regional receives grant money to attract more commercial flights. Since it began receiving the funds, Fort

Smith Regional has added three new daily flights and upgraded two other daily flights. The Small Community Air Service Development Pilot Program helps grow the nation's aviation system by attracting carriers to smaller communities and giving travelers more options.

The advancements in aviation over the past 100 years would have never come to fruition if it were not for our commitment to manned flight. "FLIGHT-100" represents our continued commitment to aviation. Continuing this investment is important to the Third District of Arkansas as our it helps us meet our infrastructure needs and as we have seen over the past 100 years, connects us with the world in ways the Wright Brothers could have only imagined.

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